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FIFTEEN CASES

Presenting Specific Problems That Have Confronted
County Extension Agents in Connection with Work of
Soil Conservation Districts

Each of these cases presents a situation on which
the work of the county agent might strengthen or
weaken the administration of a soil conservation
district by the governing body.

ANSWER
BOOK

CASE NO. 1

Situation: Two years after the Jackson County Soil Conservation District was organized the supervisors of the district had not discussed or adopted a policy concerning the selection or use of farms for demonstrations in soil conservation. The county agent had not helped to initiate action along this line although he had discussed the subject with the work unit conservationist from time to time. They agreed that such demonstrations were needed and that they would add to the effectiveness of soil conservation education.

Questions: Is the county agent in this situation affecting soil conservation district administration? If so, how? What responsibility, if any, did the county agent have in helping to initiate the selection and use of such demonstration farms?

CASE NO. 2

Situation: The supervisors of the Oakland Soil Conservation District adopted a plan to work with local soil conservation leaders in carrying out district activities. The county agent, meeting with the supervisors, suggested that existing neighborhood farm leaders in extension work be assigned this job in order to avoid duplication. The supervisors agreed with this suggestion.

Three months later, at a meeting of the Board, a supervisor referred to the soil conservation activities of a neighbor in his community and said, "Is he the fellow who is going to help with soil conservation in our community? I don't believe he'll do much. He isn't interested in conservation." Since the county agent was not at this meeting, the Board decided to ask him later to help find an additional leader to serve as the leader in soil conservation activities.

Question: Was it appropriate for the district governing body to request the county agent to help find another leader for soil conservation in this case? Should the county agent meet the request of the supervisors? Who should appoint the conservation leader?

CASE NO. 3

Situation: A newly appointed, inexperienced county agent began work in the county in which the Moon County Soil Conservation District was located. This district was approximately two years old and had a good work plan and well defined policies which provided for working closely with agencies interested in soil conservation. With an interest in soil conservation and appreciative of the importance of soil conservation demonstrations, the agent selected six farms on his own initiative to be used for demonstrations during the year and requested the cooperation of the work unit conservationist, assigned to the district, in preparing conservation plans for these farms.

Question: How is district administration probably being affected by the approach used by the county agent? What is the responsibility of the county agent for assisting the governing body in carrying out its work plan? To what extent should activities of the county agent in soil conservation be planned and carried out as assistance to the district governing body?

CASE NO. 4

Situation: The governing body of the newly formed Wayne Soil Conservation District met with the county agent and the district conservationist to organize and to discuss preparation of the district program. After a period of discussion the chairman said, "This group right here will decide what goes into the program, Joe here" (a supervisor) "is a member of the county planning committee and is good at writing. He will write it up for us. We are not going to have specialists from the college or from the Soil Conservation Service come in to help us until we get onto farms doing this work." The other supervisors supported this view.

Questions: Was the board within its right in making this decision? What should have been the attitude of the county agent? How should the county agent handle his part in this situation?

CASE NO. 5

Situation: The supervisors of the Beaver Soil Conservation District, the county agent, and the district conservationist had discussed the conservation surveys in the district and the need for land capability classes and conservation recommendations for each class of land. The supervisors agreed that the survey data should be grouped for land classification. The soil surveyors and conservationists grouped the data by tentative classes according to soil types, slope, and degree of erosion. The district conservationist reported this to the supervisors showing the resulting classes on a map of a farm well known to the supervisors. The needs for recommendations were discussed. The chairman of the supervisors said to the county agent, "How about you and the Soil Conservation Service technicians reviewing these land capability classes and preparing the recommendations?"

Questions: Was the chairman's proposal sound? If not, what should be the county agent's recommendation to the governing body?

CASE NO. 6

Situation: When the Shallow Creek District supervisors named their officers the county agent was made secretary-treasurer. Since the district had no funds at that time, the agent accepted. Later the district obtained a grant of considerable equipment from the SCS which was rented on an hourly basis to cooperators. Also the State legislature made an appropriation to the State Committee which allotted funds to the district. Although considerable funds accumulated the supervisors requested the county agent to continue as secretary-treasurer. The agent agreed and made arrangements for his secretary to keep the accounts and make bank deposits. Soon occasional farmers commented that the "Agent was getting rich from running this stuff."

Question: What was the appropriate responsibility of the county agent with respect to the records and finances of the soil conservation district? What was the responsibility of the governing body for keeping the records and caring for the finances of districts?

CASE NO. 7

Situation: In connection with a meeting for explaining the 1945 AAA program the county agent furnished farmers in the Fairfield Community information in regard to the soil conservation district program and how the farmers of the community might obtain the help of the district. One farmer said, "We would like to work with this district but we obtained a copy of that farmer-district agreement form and we don't like the idea of signing it."

Question: What was the county agent's duty to this group of farmers? To the supervisors?

CASE NO. 8

Situation: Land use adjustments in the Bender Soil Conservation District, needed in order to conserve soil resources, together with an increase in the use of fertilizers and favorable weather, resulted in an accumulation of large amounts of hay and pasture over a period of three years. Individual farmers complained that they didn't have the livestock or markets as outlets for the hay. This kind of comment became so general that members of the district governing body wondered if soil conservation had been "oversold."

Question: Did the district governing body have any responsibility for preventing the problem arising or for solving it after it developed? What responsibility, if any, did the county agent have in helping to appraise progress or helping to adjust the program of the district or helping district cooperators to increase livestock production and find markets?

CASE NO. 9

Situation: The aggressive governing body in Hooper Soil Conservation District invited the local representatives of six agricultural agencies, including the county agricultural agent, to meet with the board. The stated purpose was to bring about a better coordination of activities during the next three months in order to get as many farmers as possible to farm on the contour. The group discussed what needed to be done, when it was to be done, and who would do it. Each representative committed himself to a part in the program.

Questions: Was it appropriate for the governing body to initiate and hold this meeting for purposes of coordination? What was the appropriate function of the county agent with respect to such coordination?

CASE NO. 10

Situation: At a monthly meeting of the Mayfair District supervisors, attended by the county agent and the district conservationist, the supervisors urged that a greater amount of educational work in soil conservation be conducted. The county agent opposed the suggestion on the grounds that enough applications for farm conservation plans were on hand to keep the two technicians busy for six months and that farmers who have to wait too long to get district help after applying react unfavorably to the district.

Questions: Was the position taken by the county agent sound? Would the supervisors be going beyond their authority if they arranged for more educational work through vocational agricultural teachers and others?

CASE NO. 11

Situation: In the Beck County Soil Conservation District, the governing body made plans for a series of meetings on cover crops. The purpose of the meetings was to see and informally discuss field demonstrations of the use of Crotalaria. The owner of each farm selected was to explain the planting mixture used, how they prepared the soil, the fertilizer used, the date of planting and other factors. The supervisors did not plan for the demonstrations with the county agent and did not discuss the series of meetings with him.

Questions: Was the initiative of the governing body in this case an indication of effective or weak district administration? What course, if any, should the county agent take?

CASE NO. 12

Situation: The supervisors of the Big River Soil Conservation District at their regular meeting in January reviewed with the county agent and the district conservationist the progress of the district to date and made plans for the year. The annual report showed that approximately 50 plans per technician had been approved and that approximately 17 percent of the planned practices had been established on farms during the year. The chairman commented "Farmers don't seem to carry out the plans as fast as they should. What can we do to get more soil conservation on the land?"

Questions: Was the chairman appropriately concerned from the administrative standpoint in the rate of practice establishment? What contribution, if any, could the county agent have made in this case? If any, how should he have gone about it?

CASE NO. 13

Situation: The governing body of Mountain View Soil Conservation District had received applications for technical help in farm planning from more than 100 farmers in seven different communities. In discussing the situation at a regular monthly meeting the supervisors and the District Conservationist agreed that it would be impossible to furnish technical assistance to all applicants this season (soil conservation surveys and capability maps were available for all farms in the district). Supervisor Smith said: "It looks to me like the farmers could help a lot in getting this conservation work done." Turning to county agent Jones he said, " You know how you used to cull chickens for individual farmers, and when the requests got so many you couldn't handle them you got a bunch of farmers together and taught a dozen or more at once how to cull their own flocks. Couldn't some of this conservation work be done that way?"

Questions: What should be the answer of the county agent to this question? What steps might the district governing body take to meet the needs of farmers applying for help? The county agent? What should be asked of each community group?

CASE NO. 14

Situation: The county agent and the Soil Conservation Service technicians in one district proposed that farm conservation plans provide for terraces on land of certain slopes, degrees of erosion and kinds of soil. The district governing body believed that on such lands contour strip cropping coupled with grass waterways would suffice, or at least should first be tried before constructing terraces. Farmers in the district resisted terracing which probably was the basis for the proposed policy of the governing body.

Questions: To what extent was it the function of the governing body to determine types of conservation practices to be recommended to land owners and operators? Does the county agent have a responsibility for such recommendations? How might the views regarding the recommendations be harmonized?

CASE NO. 15

Situation: During a series of community meetings held by the county agent of Christian County in the interest of creating a soil conservation district the reaction to the proposal varied from community to community. In general, each farmer wanted to know what benefits he would gain and what obligations he would have to meet. Some expressions at different meetings were "I don't see what we could do with a district that can't be done without a district." And "Let's organize at once to get this government service."

Question: What information should the county agent give about the administration of the proposed district in answer to these comments?